

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

Report of the Proceedings of Annual Conference 1982, held at Bedford House, London, on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, 9th, 10th, and 11th April 1982.

Attendances

Friday AM 13 Branches represented, 25 Delegates sitting. Branches not represented- Edinburgh, Haringey, North East, and South West London.
Friday PM 17 Branches represented, 39 Delegates sitting. All Branches represented.
Saturday PM 17 Branches represented, 39 Delegates sitting. All Branches represented.
Sunday AM 17 Branches represented, 34 Delegates Sitting. All Branches represented
Sunday PM 17 Branches represented, 40 Delegates sitting. All Branches represented.

Financial Report.

Canteen Takings £129-83

Purchases £86-09

Balance £43-74

Collections.

£37-21

£35-55

£58-13½

£34-10½ Friday (propaganda Meeting.)

Total £165-00

Lit. Sales

Friday £78-45

Evening £6-85

Saturday £56-52

Sunday £33-35

Total £175-17

Several subscriptions for the S.S. were also taken. The Right to be Lazy sold out.

Note This report should be read in conjunction with the Amendments to Rules, Instructed Resolutions, and items for Discussion of the Final Agenda.

General Secretary.

78th ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1982

FRIDAY, 9th APRIL, 1982: 10.20 a.m.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN:

Com. D. Donnelly (Glasgow) was elected Chairman on the motion of V. Vanni (Glasgow) and E. Walters (Islington).

Com. H. Valour (Glasgow) was elected Vice-Chairman on the motion of M. Hopwood (Croydon) and V. Vanni (Glasgow).

ELECTION OF TELLERS:

Com. L. Cox (Paddington) and P. Bentley (Bolton) were appointed Tellers by agreement of the delegates.

AMENDMENTS TO RULE

RULE 12 (Glasgow & Guildford):

Vanni (Glasgow) stated that qualified members were needed to carry on EC duties. Last year there were plenty of nominations but sometimes there were only 14 or less.

LOST 9 - 31

RULE 13: It was agreed that the resolutions to amend this Rule fall.

RULE 15: (Croydon resolution Guildford amendment):

Howell (Guildford) said that it is impossible to know how members 'feel' but it is easy to see how they act.

Lawrence (Croydon): In the Rule book and Party custom it is the case that EC members go on the EC as delegates, not individuals. Just as delegates at Conference are instructed by branches, so the EC must be instructed by Conference. There is no system in the Rule book for dealing with E.C. members who fail to carry out Conference decisions.

D'Arcy (Camden) asked who will terminate the membership of such E.C. members.

Edwards (West London) pointed out that last year 6 E.C. members were accused of not carrying out Conference decisions, but they thought that they were.

Lawrence (Croydon): The majority of E.C. members will decide on members who fail to act democratically.

G. Slapper (Bolton): The right to recall E.C. members should reside with the membership, not the E.C.

AMENDMENT LOST 15 - 26

RESOLUTION LOST 5 - 39

RULE 17: (Guildford resolution - amendments by Glasgow and Croydon):

R. Cox (Guildford): The Rule change is designed to emphasise that the E.C. must work in accordance with Polls, Rules and Conference decisions, and to avoid the Rule being broken up and parts looked at in isolation.

Vanni (Glasgow): Glasgow opposes the E.C. having to accept floor resolutions as binding.

Lawrence (Croydon): The E.C. should be able to delegate production of literature to a committee, but that committee has the whole Party to consult.

C. Slapper (Islington) said that the E.C. should administer the Party in accordance with floor recommendations, even if it is not bound to implement them.

D'Arcy (Camden): The Rule as it stands is satisfactory. Because some E.C. members do not function in an efficient way they cannot deal with literature in the old way. There is ineptitude. There is an attempt to remove E.C. control over Party literature. A couple of years ago the Conference were deceived into a wrong decision - where literature is not subject to broad-based discussion. NPC has produced leaflet on Poland which is fundamentally opposed to what the Party stands for. Glasgow branch want people to produce leaflets in secret. The E.C. are a lot of spineless yes-men who can't bother to look at Party statements.

Marshall (East London): What does 'management associated with' mean? If Polish leaflet is an example of new procedure, heaven help us.

C. Slapper (Islington): Where is D'Arcy's evidence that NPC works in secret?

Atkinson: Croydon feels that the Party should have the last word on literature, not the E.C.

Vanni (Glasgow): D'Arcy says that Conference was deceived - by whom if not themselves? He says the NPC is a leadership situation because it edits literature without the E.C. seeing it; in that case, so is the SSPC. Membership is watching the NPC to ensure that it acts competently. Rule 17 was all right but last year some E.C. members abused it.

Lawrence (Croydon): The E.C. has often delegated some of its own members to edit literature. It was never the practice of the E.C. to read the text of all leaflets. Give NPC a job to do and let them get on with it - if they are no good, get rid of them.

CROYDON AMENDMENT LOST 15 - 28
GLASGOW AMENDMENT CARRIED 25 - 18
GUILDFORD SUB.-RESOLUTION LOST 11 - 31

POINT OF ORDER raised whether Com. R. Cox (Guildford) should be sitting as a delegate as he had been elected to the 79th Executive Committee, but had resigned on 23rd March, 1982. The work of the 79th E.C. was not under review, but the position under the Rule was not entirely clear; the following was then moved -

RESOLUTION - P. Lawrence (Croydon) and E. Walters (Islington): "That Com. R. Cox be allowed to sit." AGREED

POINT OF ORDER: Com. J. Knight (Central) queried the method of calculating Central Branch voting and the Acting Central Branch Secretary replied.

RULE 17 (Glasgow):

Brief discussion. LOST 19 - 26

RULE 17 (N.W. London resolution - amendments N.W. London and Guildford):

Hamme (N.W. London): Read out a circular which was sent to all branches and Central Branch members.

R. Cox (Guildford): Amendment intended to retain position arrived at last Conference.

H. Walters (Islington): E.C. is controlling body of the Party and appoints sub-committees, some of which must work relatively independently for the sake of practicality. The E.C. is not infallible. A lot of sub-committees advise the E.C. Members join the Party on basis of equality. There is an unfounded fear about delegating functions in relation to literature production.

Moss (Swansea): ADM resolved alleged contradiction between Rule 17 and 1981 Conference resolution. Certain branches and members seem to be spending all their time finding criticisms of pamphlets and leaflets: some branches cannot write English. The NPC have replied to criticisms: the complaints show that the branches making them reject the Party case as stated (Polish leaflet). There are erroneous statements in some pamphlets edited by the E.C., e.g. Questions of the Day and the T.U. pamphlet. Errors have always been made and always will be. Criticisms of the NPC implicit in this amendment are unjustified.

Edwards (W. London): The E.C. should consider all literature. Does not know what the NPC find objectionable about this.

D'Arcy (Camden): How can the NPC function like the SSPC when its three members live in three different cities? It is suggested that new procedure allows for speed and efficiency. Polish leaflet supported reformist position. It is not the E.C.'s role to edit literature: I always opposed word by word editing: but they should consider it.

Lawrence (Croydon): N.W. London's resolution would commit the E.C. to a rigid system which would be impractical.

Cook (Birmingham & NPC): The NPC meet by travelling considerably. The Party is in a dilemma: it wants leaflets to be both prompt and watertight. It cannot always expect perfection in both.

C. Slapper (Islington): Members should look at the immense amount of new literature which has been produced by the NPC - more than for a number of years - and judge it for themselves.

May (E.C. member): When first draft of "Is a Third World War Inevitable" (ITWWI) was presented to the E.C., 6 members made detailed criticisms of it. Now the NPC has corrected most of the points criticised. Had they not done so the Party would have had to have repudiated ITWWI. The E.C. did spend much time on the T.U. pamphlet; it re-wrote the last chapter because it considered that the NPC version lacked impact. Under the new procedure the E.C. would not be able to do this.

Lawrence (Croydon): The text of ITWWI when presented to the E.C. originally was not a final text: the E.C. approved the title and subject of the pamphlet.

GUILDFORD AMENDMENT LOST 8 - 42
N.W. LONDON AMENDMENT CARRIED 29 - 21
N.W. LONDON SUB-RESOLUTION LOST 18 - 32

RULE 17: (Croydon):

D'Arcy (Camden) asked what "organise the publication of" meant.

Lawrence (Croydon): It places responsibility firmly in the hands of the E.C. and includes delegation of function, consistent with maintenance of high quality.

Cook (Birmingham & NPC): The E.C. holds the purse-strings, so has final control.

RESOLUTION LOST 7 - 41

RULE 21 (Southend resolution - addendum Guildford):

R. Cox (Guildford): Addendum intended to clear away acrimony that might arise from the E.C. not implementing a Conference recommendation.

Lawrence (Croydon): Southend seem to be suggesting that Conference floor resolution is less important than an E.C. resolution.

GUILDFORD ADDENDUM LOST 3 - 48

SOUTHEND RESOLUTION LOST 17 - 32

RULE 22 (Islington):

Brief discussion.

RESOLUTION LOST 23 - 25

RULE 22 (N.W. London):

Hamme (N.W. London) read a circular which had been sent to branches and Central branch members.

Hopwood (Croydon) asked whether N.W. London think that only attending special branch meetings constitutes activity. Glasgow branch may have small attendance at business meetings, but they sell £1,000 worth of literature.

Vanni (Glasgow): N.W. London circular fails to show how present voting system is anomalous. Attendance at meetings not sole basis of membership; some London branches are good at running business meetings and doing little else.

W. Knox (Edinburgh): Making Socialists is more important than attending business meetings.

Goodman (E.C. member): Paddington branch has been reduced in numbers by the formation of two other branches. The few members left would, under the proposals of N.W. London, have to carry the additional work involved in postal voting etc.

RESOLUTION LOST 10 - 40

It was agreed that the addendum to Rule 23 should fall.

NEW RULE 25 (Islington resolution - amendments Bolton, E. London, Guildford and N.W. London):

C. Slapper (Islington): Too much Conference time is spent on administration, bureaucracy and personalities - not enough time given to the real business of the Party - propaganda.

Marshall (E. London): Supports resolution but unfair to disqualify branches for not reporting.

Cook (Birmingham): Intention is to encourage propaganda activity but it may involve considerable bureaucratic activity for some branches.

Moss (Swansea): This would discourage branches which are inactive. It is a better idea for branches to make a verbal report to Conference and he assumed this item had been omitted from the Final Agenda in error.

Lawrence (Croydon): There is already enough communication between members about organisational methods. We should not make inactive members feel like second-class members.

N.W. LONDON AMENDMENT LOST 22 - 23

GUILDFORD AMENDMENT LOST 23 - 27

E. LONDON AMENDMENT LOST 16 - 31

BOLTON AMENDMENT LOST 22 - 28

ISLINGTON RESOLUTION LOST 5 - 45

RULE 26 (Islington resolution - amendment N.W. London):

C. Slapper (Islington): The intention is to clarify the position of Party Polls. They should be given higher priority than Rules and Conference decisions because they are relatively quick, they involve the entire membership and they involve the minimum of delegation.

Ross (N.W. London): Poll decisions may conflict with Rules. The E.C. should point out the need to amend such Rules, not break them.

Robinson (North East): Members are capable of deciding for themselves whether Polls conflict with Rules; they do not need a superior authority to decide for them.

K. Knight (E.C. member): It is the E.C.'s job to frame the question for a Party Poll. Debate about deposit account is an example of conflict with Rule being included in a Poll question.

Lawrence (Croydon): The E.C. should not have the right to frame Poll questions. The E.C. can advise a branch raising a Poll that it is in conflict with Rule. The way in which a question is asked can influence the answer.

D'Arcy (Camden): The E.C. has power by Rule to call a Poll. If Polls take over everything, the rights of members under Rule will be lost.

N.W. LONDON AMENDMENT LOST 20 - 30

ISLINGTON RESOLUTION CARRIED 35 - 13 as under :

RULE 26 "Addend: 'The result of a Party Poll shall overrule all other decisions (i.e. E.C., Conference or previous Party Poll decisions).'"

INSTRUCTED RESOLUTIONS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT:

1. FINANCE

Master Form 'C': H. Walters (Islington) pointed out that the figure shown for the branch's propaganda adverts should have been £325.25, not £25.25, and the total for that column £799.49 instead of £499.49.

N.W. London resolution - amendments Bolton & Glasgow, Paddington and Guildford.
Brief discussion.

GUILDFORD AMENDMENT LOST 18 - 33
PADDINGTON AMENDMENT LOST 16 - 33
BOLTON & GLASGOW AMENDMENT LOST 9 - 40
N.W. LONDON RESOLUTION LOST 21 - 24

2. BALLOTS: No discussion on Ballot Committee report.

Resolution (a) Guildford:

R. Cox (Guildford): The need for secret ballots is to prevent the possibility of pressure being put on members.

Wood (Central): Party has never accepted secrecy. Have we reached a position where members have to look over their shoulders in case others see how they vote?

G. Slapper (Bolton): Secret ballots were introduced to prevent intimidation. This would not happen in the Party, so opposed to secret ballot.

D'Arcy (Camden): Secret ballots are proposed by members who want to act in secret.

F. Ambridge (Swansea): Had been on the Ballot Committee for many years and there had always been secret ballots.

RESOLUTION LOST 8 - 41

Resolution (b) Swansea:

Moss (Swansea): Idea more practical: small number of members attend branch meetings puts burden of work on overworked branch secretaries. Number of ballot papers completed may be a reflection of method of distribution.

Hopwood (Croydon & Ballot Committee): Insignificant difference of returns whether ballot forms sent direct or via branch secretaries. Less members have complained of not receiving ballot papers when sent through branch.

RESOLUTION LOST 24 - 27

Resolution (c) Swansea - two Amendments - Bolton:

Moss (Swansea): Amendments out of order as they negate the terms of the resolution. If members or branches have good reason to see the ballot papers they can ask the E.C., giving their reason, the Ballot Committee being under E.C. supervision.

Marshall (E. London & Ballot Committee): Would not mind the whole Party being round the ballot box while the count was progressing. Disturbed about the fear of anyone else knowing how you have voted.

Robinson (North East): N.E. Branch don't care if it is known how they vote.

W. Knox (Edinburgh): Who is being intimidated or pressurised? Anyone doing this should not be in the Party.

Howell (E.C. member): Ballot is neither secret nor open, but sloppy. Only those near to Head Office have access to ballot.

Hopwood (Croydon & Ballot Committee): Objected to suggestions that ballot was conducted sloppily.

L. Cox (E.C. member): He was first attracted to the Party by its openness. No need for secrecy in the SPGB as it implies a lack of trust between members. Would consider it an honour if members asked him why he voted as he did.

Johnson (Central): referred to the history of the secret ballot - it belonged to capitalism.

BOLTON AMENDMENTS (taken together) CARRIED 28 - 23

SWANSEA SUB-RESOLUTION CARRIED 25 - 20 :

"This Conference instructs the E.C. to see to it that ballots of the Party membership are fully open and fully democratic by allowing access to the ballot papers after the ballot committee has declared a result."

3. BRANCHES, MEMBERSHIP & ORGANISATION:

Resolution (a) Haringey:

Bradley (Haringey): Party has been in existence for a long time and is still small. Need to look at the co-ordination of efforts within the Party and relationship between publicity and propaganda - to look at the Party as a whole. It needs to be done - if not this year, it will have to be done some time. There has never been such a potential for a Socialist organisation.

W. Knox (Edinburgh): Haringey urge the Party to plan propaganda, but looking at the Master Form 'C' they do not seem to be selling many Standards.

Cook (Birmingham): Reports of investigating committees tend to be pretty dismal. If members have good ideas they should spread them around and practice them.

Gibbs (Haringey): Planning propaganda should be dealt with systematically.

RESOLUTION LOST 19 - 21

FRATERNAL GREETINGS were received from Com. Harry Morrison of the WSP, and it was agreed that the General Secretary reply with greetings from Conference.

CONFERENCE ADJOURNED at 5.35 p.m.

SATURDAY, 10th APRIL, 1982 - 1.30 p.m.

The meeting commenced with the annual reports from delegates of branch activity since last Conference. All branches reported.

3. BRANCHES, MEMBERSHIP & ORGANISATION (cont'd):

Resolution (b) Paddington and Guildford Amendment:

Critchfield (Paddington): The original Paddington resolution was sent to the E.C. at a time when members were issuing many circulars without consulting the committees involved.

D'Arcy (Camden) asked for the circulars concerned to be identified.

Ross (N.W. London): N.W. London does not want to stop circulars but hopes that conditions which give rise to them will fade away.

W. Knox (Edinburgh): Members should never feel inhibited from circulating the Party and stating their views. Provincial members are fed up with personal disputes between London members who think that their status in the Party is more important than the Party itself.

L. Cox (E.C. member): The resolution does not propose to stifle criticism, but to ensure that the criticisms are first taken up with the committees or people concerned.

D'Arcy (Camden): Camden has issued circulars re articles which have appeared in the Standard. It did so because it received unsatisfactory replies from the E.C. and SSPC.

C. Slapper (Islington): Impossible to discuss matter without being specific. Resolution deals with circulars from individual members. Recent circulars have attacked members without first raising the matter with them. These contain carping criticisms: they should be comradely and constructive.

May (E.C. member): The 79th E.C. has passed a ruling that it will not consider letters of criticism until sub-committees have been consulted. This is a departure from traditional E.C. practice. N.W. London branch wrote to the E.C. re NPC work and this was passed to the NPC. There has been no reply for nearly two months. Circular from NPC had made serious charges against him for raising constructive criticisms of ITWWI, yet later these criticisms were taken up by the NPC.

PROCEDURE MOTION - Moss (Swansea) and E. Knox (Edinburgh): "That the vote be taken."
LOST 13 - 20

Goodman (E.C. member): The E.C.'s ruling was not intended to prevent discussion. If it has taken 6 weeks for a sub-committee to reply, the branch should write and ask why. The E.C. has been used in the past by branches to wage arguments. The new E.C. decided not to be used in this way.

Young (E.C. member): Deprecated typewriter discussions. All started over the Polish leaflet which is a lot of utter rubbish. Received reply from the NPC which was rubbish. Had to issue a circular to inform members of the situation.

Cook (NPC): reminded delegates that the Polish leaflet had been attacked several times under the guise of speaking to the Agenda, and the NPC had not yet had an opportunity to reply.

PROCEDURE MOTION - E. Knox (Edinburgh) and E. Walters (Islington): "That the vote be taken."
CARRIED 21 - 14

GUILDFORD AMENDMENT LOST 12 - 16

PADDINGTON RESOLUTION CARRIED 21 - 20

CENTRAL ORGANISER: No discussion.

4. CENTRAL BRANCH:

Moss (Swansea) asked that 4 (b) be taken before 4 (a) and this was agreed.

Resolution (b) Swansea:

Johnson (Central) opened on this item with the agreement of the Conference: Last Conference passed floor resolution re democracy of Central Branch and last ADM asked the E.C. to set up a committee to examine Central branch organisation. These have not been carried out. Central branch members want imbalance in democracy to be rectified. They play no part in Conference and cannot submit resolutions: they do not have delegates: they are unable to come together. Cardiff group questionnaire received 28 replies to question whether Central branch members would wish to receive branch correspondence and vote on proposed branch items, and 9 Central Branch members said they were willing to attend Conference. 31 replies were received out of 171 circulars sent out. Unless Central branch delegation is accepted by Conference, its members will go through the procedures in the rule book and will send delegates to next Conference. Donnelly (Glasgow): Central branch is not a branch. It is undemocratic for 28 members to speak for 170.

May (E.C. member): asked what the E.C. had done about this sub-committee.

Atkinson (General Secretary) said the present E.C. has not set up a committee: they would be interested in what the delegates have to say.

Lester (former Central Branch Secretary) said she and Com. K. Knight had found it very difficult to obtain response. All that can be done is to ensure that Central branch members get the maximum information.

Skelton (Central): Had not replied to questionnaire - not happy about its proposals. They are not democratic. Members should be more interested in getting Socialism on the map than in influencing Conference. More important to put maximum information in E.C. minutes so Central branch members know what is going on.

Goodman (E.C. member): Although Rule 22 says each branch shall send delegates, Rule 23 says branches must instruct them at special meetings. Some Central branch members could go to their local branches. One answer may be to regionalise Central branch members so that they could meet and vote on Conference Agenda.

B. McNeeney (Central) was disgusted by attitude of some members who sneer at idea of Central branch delegation. If Conference does not accept this change, Central branch will comply by the Rule and send delegates. What will you do when they come? Central branch members know what is going on in the Party and if they are not involved in decision-making, we are in danger of losing active provincial members.

C. Slapper (Acting Central Branch Secretary) explained Central branch voting system. Last year's Central Branch Secretaries did not investigate the problem but now it should be left to branches. Neither formulae suggested here should be endorsed but we should work on finding a solution and it should be raised on next year's Agenda.

Moran (Islington) suggested that Central branch members should be urged to attend local branches to vote.

Lawrence (Croydon): Only a difference in degree between Central branch and Glasgow branch voting strengths at Conference.

Johnson (Central): Cardiff group took the matter up because the Central Branch Investigation Committee was not set up. There is a minority of members in every branch who tend to formulate decisions. Central branch representation at Conference may help to activate its members.

SWANSEA RESOLUTION LOST 8 - 39

Resolution (a) Guildford:

Brief discussion.

GUILDFORD RESOLUTION LOST 15 - 33

FLOOR RESOLUTION - R. Critchfield (Paddington) and E. Smith (Paddington):

"That this Conference recommends the E.C. to implement as soon as possible the floor resolution passed at the 1981 Conference which asked the E.C. to investigate how the participation of the Central Branch members can be made more democratic and to report in detail to the 1982 Autumn Delegate Meeting."

CARRIED 37 - 2

A Bolton branch floor resolution was put, but it was agreed that this be sent to the Central Branch Investigating Committee.

5. CONFERENCE & ANNUAL DELEGATE MEETING:

Resolution Swansea - Amendments Swansea, Glasgow and Bolton:

Moss (Swansea): Rules do not distinguish between floor and other resolutions. Rule 15 says the E.C. shall give effect to all resolutions. Decisions taken by 30 or 40 accredited delegates are going to be more democratic than a decision taken by 14 E.C. members. Matters decided at Conference are not for further deliberation but for implementation. Resolution allows branches to write to the E.C. to disagree with the actions taken by their delegates.

Donnelly (Glasgow): It is a good safeguard that floor resolutions only recommend.

G. Slapper (Bolton): Amendment by Bolton gives an option to recommend.

Edwards (W. London): Present system satisfactory: in past E.C. has carried out floor resolutions when they have been passed by a considerable majority.

Skelton (Central): You would be giving delegates power to decide Party Policy. In past ADM has passed floor resolutions opposing mandated Conference decisions. Delegates do not always represent their branch's views.

Lawrence (Croydon): The E.C. should not be allowed to ignore floor resolutions: if it opposes floor resolutions it must consult with branches. In the past the E.C. did this. It is important to confirm that Conference decisions have a higher status than E.C. decisions.

BOLTON AMENDMENT CARRIED 26 - 25

GLASGOW AMENDMENT CARRIED 32 - 19

SWANSEA RESOLUTION WITH SWANSEA AMENDMENT AS SUB-RESOLUTION

LOST 19 - 32

6. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Resolution (a) Guildford: Brief discussion, mainly concerning what would be most convenient for London members who are likely to stand for the E.C.

RESOLUTION LOST 5 - 32

Resolution (b) Guildford:

R. Cox (Guildford): Based on the recognition of the fact that a floor recommendation should carry more weight than an E.C. resolution, to have to have a two-thirds majority would remove any doubt about the strength of feeling in favour of a floor resolution.

RESOLUTION LOST 5 - 44

Resolution (c) Guildford: Brief discussion.

RESOLUTION LOST 20 - 25

7. EDUCATION:

Vanni (Glasgow): The Branch report omitted to mention the Glasgow 2-day Weekend School last November which had been a great success.

D'Arcy (Camden): Camden had written critical comments on some of the Education Bulletins but the Education Committee refused to circulate them. The branch had to do so itself.

W. Knox (Edinburgh): Edinburgh had not received some of the editions of the Bulletin.

H. Walters (Islington): Education meetings at Head Office have been poorly attended although the Committee has put in much work and produced some excellent material.

Skelton (Central): Subjects discussed too esoteric. Members cannot understand some of the material: classes on fetishism are of no interest to speakers.

McNeeney (Education Committee): The most academic of all the subjects of education classes have been the most successful. Branches should co-operate with the committee in organising basic education classes. Branches should apply to Head Office for copies of Bulletins. It is appalling that controversial bulletins, one or two of which have seriously questioned some Party ideas, have received no comments from members.

ADJOURNMENT at 6 p.m.

SUNDAY, 11th APRIL, 1982 10.45 a.m.

EDUCATION (cont'd)

E. Walters (Islington): Party needs more education classes, in relation to speaking especially, and should include training on voice technique, radio and TV presentation etc.

Young (E.C. member): Wrong to use old-fashioned methods - we should have study groups or seminars.

Goodman (E.C. member): Had been sent on a public speaking course by her employers and found it extremely useful. We should take advantage of anything we can learn from the professionals.

RESOLUTION CARRIED 30 - 0

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT:

E. Walters (Islington): Endorsed the General Secretary's remarks that members should give notice that they wish to resign from Party posts, and hand over properly to their successors. This has to be done in capitalist work and is the very least that can be done in a Socialist party.

D'Arcy (Camden): This is not a general secretary's report but the comments of one E.C. member. It would have been better if it had not been written. It is untrue that members have "deserted their posts" - they were hounded and harrassed throughout part of last year and for several previous years, so that they found it impossible to carry on. That they did not carry out uninstructed Conference decisions amounted to nothing. You now can't get London members to go to Head Office to do jobs; you have to drag someone down from Bolton. The members referred to were the established members of the Party - if you don't want to lose them, don't change the organisation.

C. Slapper (Islington): Com. D'Arcy should be more specific about how and when members were harrassed. Resignations were of Com. Miles (General Secretary) and Com. K. Knight (Central Branch Secretary). Com. Miles resigned over a point of principle on which he disagreed with the E.C. Com. Knight resigned because he was not elected to the 1982 E.C. and would not be attending Head Office. Com. Skelton resigned as Head Office Assistant, then accepted nomination for the following year and was not elected because the E.C. preferred another candidate. The present General Secretary has done excellent work to improve the state of Head Office.

Edwards (W. London): Com. Miles had felt insulted by comments made at the Special Party meeting on the Party Poll. Com. Skelton tendered her resignation on a point of honour and the E.C. accepted it.

Vanni (Glasgow): There are certain members who will only work for the Party if they can get things their way. Com. Miles was such a member. There are faults on both sides, however. Don't believe that one side is victim and the other side persecutor.

Cottis (Southend): London members have done great damage to the Party. Non-London members find it hard to make a balanced judgment about what is going on.

Lester (Central): Com. Miles had been upset at criticism at the special meeting. Error of judgment of General Secretary, 1982, to write report for 1981. Gave a comprehensive account of her action in ceasing work at Head Office and reasons for it.

At this point, the Chairman ruled that there should be no further discussion on the General Secretary's Report.

PROCEDURE MOTION - D'Arcy (Camden) and Ross (N.W. London): "That the Chairman leave the Chair." LOST 7 - 23

PROCEDURE MOTION - Edwards (W. London) and Ross (N.W. London): "That the General Secretary's report be discussed to its conclusion." CARRIED 18 - 12

Davies (E.C. member): There are not two sides in the Party but different points of view. If provincial delegates are not interested in what goes on in London, they are not interested in the Party.

Skelton (Central): Members are getting the impression that Head Office is no longer a happy ship. Com. Atkinson had not co-operated with her over work of the new Head Office Assistant.

Hopwood (Croydon): The new Head Office Assistant, Com. McLaughlan, was chosen because he was the best candidate for the job. He can use a typewriter, the duplicating machine, and he can get on well with comrades. Com. Skelton could not do these things. Very pleased to see provincial members taking part at Head Office.

Goodman (E.C. member): Com. Atkinson prepared report of ADM which Com. Miles, the ex-General Secretary, should have done. He did his best in producing a report to Conference. Would members have liked to see 'no report' in the E.C.'s report to Conference? The E.C. has no power to edit the General Secretary's report, nor the report of the Central Organiser, to which some members of the E.C. very strongly objected.

Coleman (E.C. member): Members can make their own minds up from E.C. minutes on a lot of matters. Nobody is doubting the excellent work done by the Secretaries last year. Com. Atkinson has put in a tremendous amount of work in the administration of the Party, as has Com. McLaughlan. You cannot be hounded out of the working class (however much you may try), so you have to work within the only genuine working class party. What D'Arcy calls harrassment, anarchists call "the tyranny of the majority" - Socialists call it democracy. People who engage in "club mentality" seek to perpetuate themselves in the Party rather than to change society. You cannot develop the Party without serious disagreements.

Howell (E.C. member): Arguments in the Party are over serious points. Com. Skelton was warned before she produced her letter that her resignation was likely to be accepted because the E.C. had stated that it would consider resignations very seriously. Head Office is now a happier ship than it was.

The Chairman stated that the former General Secretary had not submitted a report to the Conference.

CANTEEN COMMITTEE: E. Walters (Islington) and D'Arcy (Camden) moved a vote of thanks to the Canteen Committee AGREED

The General Secretary stated that it is the intention to completely reorganise the canteen at Head Office in accordance with modern standards and with regard to health and safety, and to make Head Office generally a place where members can enjoy working. We need to paint the place and he suggested we have murals.

8. HEAD OFFICE:

Resolution - Guildford - Bolton Addendum - Bolton:

R. Cox (Guildford): We have substantial funds to sustain a full-time paid Head Office Organiser. Greater use could be made of the premises and facilities. As Party grows it will need full-time staff. By appointing organiser we can stimulate growth.

McLaughlan (Bolton): Guildford resolution is not practical enough. E.C. needs to report to ADM with a view to appointment being made in 1983.

E. Walters (Islington): The Party should take on full-time organiser on one- or two-year freelance basis.

Edwards (W. London): Party cannot afford £4-5,000 per year. How do we get the money except for members dying?

Cook (Birmingham): Party would need to pay £8,000 approx. per annum. Branch does not think Party can afford this.

Lester (Central): When party is big enough it will have funds to pay. A Conference resolution in the 1970's stated that the first full-time paid employee should be a secretary.

Waite (Treasurer): Party cannot afford to pay for full-time official. Members would have to levy themselves £10 per week.

ADDENDUM - BOLTON LOST 22 - 26

GUILDFORD RESOLUTION CARRIED 25 - 24:

"That the Party establish in principle the need for a full-time paid Head Office Organiser."

HEAD OFFICE ASSISTANT'S REPORT: Com. Skelton said a line had been omitted from her report.

9. LITERATURE:

Resolution (a) Guildford - Islington Amendment:

R. Cox (Guildford): We do not mean an internal journal like Forum, but a theoretical journal for the public. Advantageous to co-operate with the Companion Parties on this project.

C. Slapper (Islington): No objection to the Companion Parties being involved, but on grounds of efficient production of the journal, think it would be better produced by the SPGB in one country.

Edwards (W. London): Would prefer to see theoretical articles in the Standard.

Coleman (E.C. member): Need for journal in which lengthy, in-depth articles can feature. Need to be historically knowledgeable about capitalism and about the Party itself. Debates over the years in the Party constitute a significant contribution to working class political theory. New journal should be forum for socialist debate of the kind that the working class will be free to scrutinise. In the early days TU debates were fully reported in the S.S. As Marx said, we need to have a theory of theory - question everything.

ISLINGTON AMENDMENT LOST 16 - 31

GUILDFORD RESOLUTION LOST 23 - 24

Resolution (c) Islington - Amendment Guildford:

Brief discussion continuing points raised on Resolution 9 (a).

GUILDFORD AMENDMENT LOST 16 - 35

ISLINGTON RESOLUTION LOST 24 - 28

It was agreed to take Resolution (b) Islington and amendments with NPC's report, after lunch adjournment.

CLSC - No discussion.

CENTRAL BRANCH SECRETARY'S REPORT - No discussion.

ESTATES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE - No discussion.

FORMS 'A' SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - No discussion.

GROUPS ORGANISER'S REPORT: Com. Edwards (Doncaster) reported briefly on activity in Doncaster and his hope that a branch would be formed there soon.

HEAD OFFICE LIBRARY COMMITTEE REPORT: Com. Hopwood (Croydon) commented on the hard work done by Com. Hutton but regretted the under-use of the library.

OVERSEAS CONTACTS SECRETARY's REPORT:

C. Slapper (Islington): Reminded members that volunteers were required to attend the Lutte Ouvriere fete in Paris.

Moss (Swansea & NPC): said he had heard from the comrades in Belfast and read extracts from their letter on the state of the WSP of Ireland.

Skelton (Central) also reported on the position in Belfast.

Atkinson (General Secretary) reported that all was not well with the WSP of the US: they have had to leave their headquarters. Difficulties caused by the lack of young members. He also reported on a recent letter from the WSP of Canada, which is also at a fairly low ebb.

Com. A. Hart (Central) sent fraternal greetings from Johannesburg.

FLOOR RESOLUTION - Hopwood (Croydon) and D'Arcy (Camden) "That fraternal greetings be sent to Com. Hart, to the Comrades in Belfast, and to Overseas Parties and Groups."

AGREED

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE - No discussion.

PARTY PRESS OFFICER's REPORT - No discussion.

Premises Committee - No discussion.

PROPAGANDA COMMITTEE's REPORT:

D'Arcy (Camden) asked whether Head Office is still carrying on propaganda: Conference should be interested in the work of the Committee.

Coleman (Propaganda Committee): Reported comprehensively on the committee's work. There has been liaison with branches and groups and particular attention to liaising with members outside London. The committee is trying to increase the number of speakers; have run Hyde Park every Sunday. Have arranged leaflet distribution at marches and demonstrations. Committee always available to deal with problems of branches and groups re propaganda. Committee intend to produce a Propaganda Manual of about 10 pages as a collection of basic suggestions on propaganda methods.

Skelton (Central) suggested the Committee did not wish to organise central London meetings and rallies. She thought central London Rallies and Trafalgar Square meetings would be useful.

Coleman (Propaganda Committee) replied that the committee favoured running meetings where preparatory and follow-up work can be done.

PUBLICITY AND MEDIA COMMITTEE's REPORT:

Com. McLeavy (Islington & Publicity Committee) spoke in favour of flexi-discs. Would like branches to give the idea a try.

9. LITERATURE (cont'd):

Resolution (b) Islington - Amendments Guildford and Glasgow:

C. Slapper (Islington): Need for efficient and speedy procedure for editing literature. This resolution is to clarify the precise details of what was carried at Conference 1981. It does not conflict with Rule 17 because the E.C. appoints the NPC. Criticisms of recent literature have been vague and insubstantial.

Edwards (W. London): ITWWI is only correct because of criticisms made by E.C. members last year.

D'Arcy (Camden): This makes nonsense of Rule 17 which says that the E.C. controls literature. How can the E.C. control the contents of something they have not seen. Let the NPC be elected then by entire membership. We have learned that the best way to get the best product is the collective wisdom of the largest number of people who can possibly consider it, although it is not foolproof. Claimed that the old way was too slow and inefficient. The E.C. can act quickly if it has the mind to do so. Leaflets in the past were produced within a few days. The Polish leaflet puts forward a reformist argument. There is an attempt to establish a caucus in the Party where the literature is handed down by a small group of people and we'll be asked to swallow it.

Cook (Birmingham & NPC): The NPC, like the SSPC, is controlled by the E.C. It is better for a small committee to write and edit literature: a camel is a horse designed by a committee. Com. D'Arcy should be specific about what is wrong with the Polish leaflet.

Vanni (Glasgow): In the 1970s it took years to produce pamphlets. Editing of literature became nit-picking. Members will reject NPC if its material is not good.

Ross (N.W. London): Apprehensive about NPC producing leaflets as some of them have not put the Party's case.

Moss (Swansea & NPC): Disputed that ITWWI was corrected by 6 E.C. members. Ross had produced no evidence of failure to put the Party's case - typical of the vague complaints being directed to the NPC. Party literature has always contained occasional errors. Quoted selection from pamphlets in print.

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W. Knox (Edinburgh): D'Arcy has made mistakes in the past: there are errors in today's publications - some slipshod work. The E.C. is largely inexperienced and some are young hotheads.

Davies (E.C. member): Moss's claim that the 16 criticisms of ITWWI made by 6 E.C. members were not taken into account by the NPC is untrue.

Young (E.C. member): The issue is not the length of the literature but who controls it. Polish leaflet advertised meeting with guest speaker who was reformist. The leaflet was a lot of nonsense. Only the editing of literature by the E.C. will work. Leaflet on 'No Fares, Not Low Fares' is reformist argument. (Reprint from March 1982 Socialist Standard)

Coleman (E.C. & NPC): Com. Knox has quoted out of context: this does not constitute serious analysis. Com. Young says 'No Fares' is a reformist slogan: so is 'No War'. So is anything if it seeks to reach its objective within capitalism. The leaflet specifically says that only by abolishing capitalism can there be no fares. The only member to write a serious criticism of the Polish leaflet was Com. Young.

C. Slapper (Islington): The resolution does not preclude the NPC from consulting any member about anything they are preparing. The air has been cleared about the NPC trying to put something over which is not the Party's case. I vote for E.C. members for administrative purposes, not because they can write or edit literature.

GLASGOW AMENDMENT CARRIED 29 - 22

GUILDFORD AMENDMENT CARRIED 27 0 16

ISLINGTON SUB-RESOLUTION CARRIED 31 - 20 :

"This Conference instructs the E.C. to adopt the following procedures with regard to the control of Party literature :-

- (i) The E.C. shall delegate the monthly editing of the Socialist Standard and the editing of short, topical leaflets to the SSPC and the NPC respectively.
- (ii) The E.C. shall commission and edit all pamphlets which are longer than the Socialist Standard.
- (iii) The E.C. shall commission short pamphlets (maximum 10,000 words) and these shall be edited by the NPC.
- (iv) All stock leaflets (i.e. those on general subjects which are intended for long-term distribution, such as the Introductory leaflet) shall be commissioned and edited by the E.C.
- (v) The E.C. shall have control, by means of a minuted resolution, over the print-run of all pamphlets and journals produced by the Party, whether such literature has been vetted by it or not."

FLOOR RESOLUTION - Hamme (N.W. London) and M. Davies (N.W. London): "That the E.C. be recommended to investigate the possibility of producing a double-sized S.S. (40 pages) to commemorate the centenary of Marx in 1983, such supplement to include a number of theoretical articles on Marxism."

Com. Young (E.C. member) in this connection stated that he had drawn up a series of lectures and there should be plenty of first-class material for a special double-sized issue of the SS.

RESOLUTION CARRIED OVERWHELMINGLY

SITUATION IN POLAND: The General Secretary had been instructed by the E.C. to ask delegates at Conference whether they were in favour of a special meeting being held on this subject in accordance with Rule 25.

FLOOR RESOLUTION - C. Slapper (Islington) and E. Walters (Islington): "That in accordance with Rule 25 the E.C. is recommended to call a special meeting on the recent events in Poland." CARRIED 24 - 8 following a brief discussion.

10. SOCIALIST STANDARD:

C. Slapper (Islington): Branch had instructed delegates to make some comments. They are very pleased with the S.S.; the cover designs have helped sales, and like the different colours and shades being used. Content very good but the editing of the material might allow for a greater variety of style.

In reply to questions, it was stated that the print run varies between 3,500 - 4,500. 200-300 are usually left each month.

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D'Arcy (Camden): There has been no recent difference in the circulation of the SS. It is no longer possible to pick hold of some subject in the SS as the basis for a session on the outdoor platform. We are selling less copies: we are trying to have items on all sorts of things which happen - dancing to capitalism's tune. Being impelled to take up every issue is the reason for the lower sales of the SS.
Hopwood (Croydon): The only time the SS is not selling is when members are not selling it.

Resolution (Southend):

H. Cottis (Southend): We must get down to selling the SS.

W. Knox (Edinburgh): Waste of Conference time discussing resolutions like this. How can you instruct the E.C. to boost the sales of the SS.

Moss (Swansea): Regards this as one of the more important resolutions on the Agenda. Every effort should be made to get the SS sold through various outlets.

Bradley (Haringey): You must have an SS which is saying the right thing in the right way and have a good appearance if you are to use commercial distribution, and bring all committees together for much greater integration. We should look at distributors who handle radical journals.

Ross (N.W. London): Some old Standards have an attraction about them. We need eye-catching matter in the SS.

Hopwood (Croydon): Branch considers there is already a committee to do this - the CLSC. There is no report in the Report to Conference and at the moment there is only one member.

Coleman (E.C. member): You have got to increase activity first in order to get increased literature sales. If you are not an active branch you don't sell Standards.

Critchfield (Paddington & SSPC): SSPC aware of effect of editing on the writers. Committee has been trying to develop contacts with writers. Committee has to edit for style as well as content. Style is subjective. Enumerated number of writers contributing to several editions of the SS: 12 writers wrote 14 articles one month; 14 writers wrote 18 items in another month. We do want to comment on almost everything which is going on in capitalism today; people are very interested in these different topics. We tried having longer articles about two years ago but members would not write the articles.

SOUTHEND RESOLUTION CARRIED 24 - 12

FLOOR RESOLUTION - C, Slapper (Islington) and E. Walters (Islington): "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to call for nominations for a Publicity and Sales Agent to be co-opted on to the SSPC."

Moss (Swansea) suggested that in view of the instructed resolution just passed, this resolution be passed to the E.C., and the delegates agreed.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE: Stated that they had submitted a report, but this had been inadvertently missed out of the Report to Conference.

TAPES COMMITTEE: The committee was asked to get out an up-to-date list of tapes.

Coleman (E.C. member): Is the committee willing to consider advertising tapes.

Chesham (Tapes Committee): Committee is revising their list and it will be circulated. They have advertised tapes on one or two occasions and had some replies: they are looking at this again.

FLOOR RESOLUTION - E. Walters (Islington) and D. Donnelly (Glasgow): "That the E.C.'s Report to Conference be adopted." AGREED

EMERGENCY FLOOR RESOLUTION ON FALKLANDS ISLANDS CRISIS: Presented by Islington branch delegates who agreed to a suggestion that they place this before the E.C. next week.

PRICE OF THE SOCIALIST STANDARD: The General Secretary had been instructed by the E.C. to ask delegates at Conference for their views as to a possible increase in the price of the S.S. It was generally felt by the delegates that the E.C. should deal with this.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. SWANSEA: "The advantages of the Socialist Standard coming out, as do many other journals, a week or ten days before the beginning of the month."

Moss (Swansea): The idea is an insurance against the late arrival of the SS which some provincial branches have experienced - 10 or 15 days into the month. It is an effective sales technique to bring out a journal at the end of the previous month.

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It would also be better where commercial distribution is concerned. He would like to move a floor resolution :

"That this Conference recommends that the E.C. examine the advantages and practicality of the S.S. coming out a week or 10 days before the beginning of the month." (Moss (Swansea) and Hughes (Swansea)

There was some protest from delegates about the number of floor resolutions being put forward - it was almost creating a new Agenda.

Vanni (Glasgow): Referred to the difficulty of having up-to-date matter in the S.S. but maybe it was a case of swings and roundabouts.

Tenner (SSPC): This would mean some articles being 1 to 1½ months late, but otherwise, no objection. Adverts for meetings etc. would have to be in earlier also.

The delegates then agreed not to take the floor resolution.

2. CAMDEN: "Should a Party Poll abrogate existing Party rules?"

D'Arcy (Camden): Party Poll should not abrogate Rules: we don't think it is in the interests of the Party.

C. Slapper (Islington): Items 2 and 3 for discussion have been discussed already via instructed resolutions on the Agenda.

Goodman (E.C. member): Cannot understand the dilemma: Party Rules are made by the Party at Conference or if Party Poll decides something new that supercedes the Rule. If a democratic decision is made to change something the Rule will have to be changed. The latest decision stands.

L. Cox (E.C. member): Party Rule is the embodiment in text form of a Party decision. The Rule book has evolved as a result of decisions on Conference resolutions.

3. CAMDEN: "Is it in the interests of the Party that the NPC should have the power to issue statements in the name of the Party?"

D'Arcy (Camden): The way the "Solidarity" leaflet was presented gave the branch the impression that it was a Party statement. These statements should be made by the E.C. not the NPC.

Cook (Birmingham & NPC): Agreed with that but it has been cleared up under the Islington Resolution.

L. Cox (E.C. member): All our publications are statements in the name of the Party but some members distinguish between the publication of leaflets and the sort of statements we make on some matter of great import.

ADJOURNMENT was agreed at 6 p.m., and Items for Discussion 4 to 12 inclusive were not reached.

A. Atkinson
General Secretary.

20th April, 1982